

EAST GREENWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE**MINUTES OF THE MARCH 7, 2006 SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING****1. Call to Order**

The East Greenwich School Committee met on Tuesday, March 7, 2006 in the East Greenwich High School Library. The meeting was called to order by Chair Vincent Bradley at 7:05 p.m. Other members present were: Vice-Chair Merrill Friedemann, Paul Martin, Steve Gregson, and William Day, as well as Superintendent Charles Meyers, Director of Administration Maryanne Crawford, Assistant Superintendent Helen O'Hara, Robert Wilmarth and Jerry Nettik. Dr. Ross arrived at the meeting at 8:20 p.m. because he was at the concert in the auditorium. Mrs. Cienki was absent.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The meeting commenced with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

3. State of District**a. Superintendent's Update****Full Day Kindergarten Report**

Mrs. Tara McAuliffe, Principal of Meadowbrook School, noted that they have had a very successful program this school year. Mr. Meyers hopes the program can be offered again next school year but it may need additional funding.

b. Reports – Financial-Auditor's Report

Mr. Bernie Poirier thanked the Town of East Greenwich for the

opportunity to serve them. He noted that the town ended the year with a deficit of \$194,528 and the school with a surplus of \$132,529. He also stated that the report was given to the Auditor General on time. Mr. Poirier stated that from a financial standpoint, the town is solid, and on a scale of 1 to 10, he would give them a rating of 7 or 8.

4. Public Comments for Items not on the Agenda

A parent had questions on the all day kindergarten program for next year.

5. Approval of Minutes

February 7 and 14 Executive Sessions, and February 7 and 14 meetings

On a motion made by Mr. Martin and seconded by Mr. Day, the Committee unanimously approved the minutes of the February 7 and 14th School Committee meetings and the February 7 and 14th Executive Sessions.

6. New Business

6.1b Appointments

On a motion made by Mr. Day and seconded by Mr. Martin, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the following appointments:

6.1.1 Douglas Haynes, Cole Middle School Boys' Head Baseball Coach

6.1.2 Neil Saunders, Cole Middle School Girls' Head Softball Coach

7. Vote on Adoption of Fiscal Year 2007 Budget

Mr. Meyers is recommending a budget for fiscal year 2007 of \$29,451,224, a 6.4% increase over fiscal year 2006. He noted that the

proposed position of Director of curriculum is being eliminated with the money put into the maintenance account. He also stated that with the additional state aid expected, the tax rate would increase 2.7%.

Mrs. Friedemann wanted to

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make sure that no central office administrator will be receiving more than a 3.7% increase which was negotiated last year. Mr. Meyers noted that the health insurance premiums may be less than anticipated and the plan is to earmark \$300,000 for a capital reserve funds. Mrs. Friedemann asked about the wireless labs. Mr. Meyers stated that the School Committee will ask the Town Council for the \$400,000 they put in escrow to be used for technology. Mr. Gregson asked if the senior project coordinator was in the budget. Mr. Meyers stated that it is a teaching position, and the person will work closely with the English Department.

Mr. Robert Holbrook discussed energy costs and asked what the School Committee has done with respect to conserving energy. He asked for an energy audit, and spoke of ways the school department could keep energy costs down. He also asked about the number of telephones in the schools and information on staffing. Mr. Holbrook stated that when the budget is presented a narrative should be given along with the numbers. Mr. Gregson responded that energy efficient windows have been installed, work was done on the boilers, and doors were replaced.

Mr. Anthony DellaGrotta spoke about the Athletic Director position being a full-time position. He also inquired about telephone costs,

saying that \$63,000 is a lot of money. He feels there is fluff in the budget. Dr. Ross responded that the first warrant was in the 90's and the second warrant was in 2003, but the School Committee did not properly budget for maintenance. Mrs. Friedemann feels the buildings are being let go, 30% of East Greenwich parents are sending their children to private school, and the Committee needs to look at what the community can bear.

Mrs. Christine Mattos stated that the numbers for central office salaries do not correlate and feels no strides have been made to improve the budget process from past year. She feels a 6% increase is modest but there is a lack of information and clarity in terms of the technical accuracy of the budget.

On the vote to approve the budget for fiscal year 2007, Mr. Bradley, Dr. Ross and Mr. Martin voted yes. Mr. Gregson, Mrs. Friedemann and Mr. Day voted no. The motion did not pass. Mrs. Friedemann feels the emphasis should be on creative budgeting and a plan should be set forth to save money. Dr. Ross feels it is too late in the budget process to shoot it down since there were multiple meetings on it. He noted that he voted yes reluctantly because of the need to move the process forward, but if the numbers do not match up, that is a problem. The budget vote will be on the agenda again for March 14, 2006.

8. EdNets Presentation on Website Proposal

Mr. Richard Trembowitz, from EdNets, gave an overview a new website which will serve schools. He spoke about a fundraising aspect with sponsor rebates, noting that East Greenwich will receive

100% of rebates. Mr. Meyers stated that EdNets has made sure they are in line with the commercialism law in Rhode Island. He also noted that any money raised would go into a foundation which has already been established.

9. Program of Studies High School Requirement for Practical Arts

Mr. Brown had a concern that because students needed to take a Practical Arts requirement they could not take a band course at the high school. He would like these concerns to be heard next year before the Program of studies is completed.

10. First Reading of Proposed Policy on Supplemental Materials

Mr. Meyers read the policy and noted that there were issues of DVD's and videos in the classrooms. He noted that there is not a policy in place.

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11. Legal Contract Decision: a) Oliverio & Marcaccio, b) Richard Ackerman

Dr. Ross made a motion which was seconded by Mr. Martin to award the legal contract to Oliverio & Marcaccio in the amount of \$90,000 and to Richard Ackerman for teacher contract negotiations for \$150 per hour. Mrs. Friedemann asked about a bid for \$72,000 from Richard Ackerman for the entire legal representation. Mr. Gregson feels there are discrepancies in the billing policies for our current firm, therefore he asked Mr. Ackerman for a proposal for all legal representation including special education. Dr. Ross gave the following statement:

“In an ideal world, we would not need attorneys. School committees

do not operate in an ideal world.

School committees need attorneys because we have limited funds and unlimited needs or desires on the part of students, parents, teachers, other employees, and the public.

What makes sense to a school committee may result in a grievance by a union, yet the very contract that a grievance is based on is negotiated with the guidance of an attorney.

A school department can be sued by anyone over anything, and we often are. Some schools have been sued over the use of specific books in English courses. Some are sued over trip and fall problems that are unrelated to education or students.

School departments are often subject to lawsuits when a parent does not feel that his child is receiving the education that he wants.

I was even told last year by a parent that her lawyer would be contacting the Superintendent because we had moved a bus stop by two blocks.

We cannot control when, or by whom, we are sued.

Because we are such an easy target, it is important to establish a strong working relationship with an attorney or firm. I believe that the East Greenwich School Committee accomplished this when we chose to hire the firm of Oliverio and Marcaccio.

This firm has provided prompt, researched, and reasoned opinions as well as sound advice in open and executive sessions.

They have successfully defended the School Committee and therefore the taxpayers of East Greenwich in lawsuits and continue to protect the taxpayers and students as they deal with union

grievances and other threats to both education and the budget.

In addition to the work I already listed, Oliverio and Marcaccio negotiated two union contracts, which were subsequently approved by the School Committee.

As you know, it is my personal wish that Richard Ackerman continue as our attorney in teacher contract negotiations because he has established a relationship with the School Committee negotiating team and the NEA negotiating team. I think these relationships are valuable.

I also believe that the relationship both the Committee and the Department have established with Oliverio and Marcaccio is valuable, and I would not see it thrown away.

I do not believe that we should change lawyers as facilely as we change paper suppliers. I believe that the services provided by the firm of Oliverio and Marcaccio and their proven track record over this past year argues that they must be retained as the primary law firm to represent the East Greenwich School Committee.”

Mr. Day made a motion to table the vote on the law firms and bring in Oliverio & Marcaccio and Richard Ackerman in Executive Session. This was seconded by Mr. Gregson. Mr. Gregson, Mr. Day and Mrs. Friedemann voted yes and Dr. Ross, Mr. Bradley, and Mr. Martin voted no. The motion did not pass. After much discussion, the motion to hire the law firm of Oliverio & Marcaccio for \$90,000 and Richard Ackerman for \$150 per hour to negotiate the teacher’s contract passed with Mrs. Friedemann and Mr. Gregson voting no. At this point, Mr. Gregson and Mrs. Friedemann left the meeting.

12. Out-of-state field trips to Boston for Cole Middle School and Agawam, Ma. for EGHS

Dr. Ross made a motion which was seconded by Mr. Day to approve the out-of-state field trips. The motion passed unanimously.

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13. School Committee Concerns

Mr. Day mentioned an article on a drinking problem that was in the Pendulum. Mr. Meyers responded that there is a movement toward personalized education and he feels that basically kids are staying healthy and not abusing drugs and alcohol.

Dr. Ross spoke about the great play at the high school this past weekend.

14. Public Comments for Items on the Agenda

15. Executive Session, R.I.G.L. 42-46-5 (a) (1) (2) Personnel Issues, Interview High School Principal Candidate, Michael Levine; Performance Review and Salary Treatment, Mrs. Crawford; Contractual Issue, Mr. Militello. On a motion made by Dr. Ross and seconded by Mr. Martin, the Committee, being polled individually, voted unanimously to go into Executive Session as stated above at 10:10 p.m.

Open Session

16. Appointment-Principal East Greenwich High School

On a motion made by Mr. Day and seconded by Dr. Ross, the Committee announced the vote to appoint Michael Levine as High School Principal with a three year contract, with a salary of \$112,500 and no travel allowance. Dr. Ross, Mr. Martin, Mr. Day and Mr. Bradley voted yes and Mrs. Friedemann voted no. Mr. Gregson was not present for the vote. The motion passed. On a motion made by Mr. Day and seconded by Dr. Ross, the Committee voted unanimously to seal the minutes of the March 7, 2006 Executive Session.

Respectfully submitted,

**Virginia Giuliani
Secretary**